



HOW · DOOTH THE · SIMPLE SPELLING BEE

OWEN WISTER

First Edition Scarce K913
\$ 15.00

Scarec K913
P 15⁰⁰



“Hup, hup, hup!”

How doth the Simple Spelling Bee

BY

OWEN WISTER

AUTHOR OF "THE VIRGINIAN," "LADY
BALTIMORE," ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. R. GRUGER

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
LONDON: THE MACMILLAN CO., LTD.

1907

All rights reserved

COPYRIGHT, 1907,
By THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY.

COPYRIGHT, 1907,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published February, 1907.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co.—Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

ILLUSTRATIONS

“Hup, hup, hup!”	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Flung the cakes at my man Edward	FACING PAGE 10
“Chickle is not liquid refreshment”	24
Professors Totts and Egghorn signing their respective works	54
Masticator B. Fellows	58
Professor Dudelsacker	82
Jesse had mounted upon the table with the still faintly bellowing Totts”	96

HOW DOTH THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

*How doth the Simple Spelling-bee
Impruv each shining ower.*

OF course, I know not how it may be with you; but with me the mail brings daily a multitude of communications that I have not sought, and do not want; nor do I refer to bills alone; and so, when there came one day a printed card saying:—

Why Heifer?

I tossed it into my waste-paper basket, and remembered it no

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

more. Some days had passed, during which I had worked onward at the index of my forthcoming volume, when my memory was jogged by the arrival of a new absurdity:—

Why not Heffer?

Like its predecessor, this card went at once into my basket. I had nearly finished the B's in my index before the mail brought the following:—

It ought to be your custom now
To simplify, and spell plough plow;
Therefore write quickly on your cuff
From this day forth to spell tough tuff.
A third must follow these first tu,
So you will always spell through thru,

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Nor in the midst of things leave off,
But joyfully now make cough coff.
By this time you must clearly noa
Dough can't be doe, do, dow, but doa.

Well, if they purposed to reform our spelling, which has always been a mere rag-bag of lawlessness, I hoped that they would do it right; but I was too deeply immersed in completing the index of my forthcoming volume to spend thought upon this question; nor did I court interruption. My waste-paper basket, therefore, received another willing contribution. And when presently the clue to these cards reached me in the following telegraphic message, just at the outset of my morning's work:—

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

CHICKLE UNIVERSITY,

Arkansopolis, October 6, 1906.

English spelling rotten to the core.

Help us.

MASTICATOR B. FELLOWS.

I responded, not without satire:—

Utterly prostrated by news. Helpless.

THOMAS GREENBERRY.

And thinking that thus I was rid of him, I proceeded quietly with the index of my forthcoming volume.

But Masticator B. Fellows, president and proprietor of Chickle University, had not done with me so easily. Since his street-boyhood, sixty years ago, this ardent personality ('tis thus the daily press describes him) had made his own

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

way, and had his own way; he was his own capital, and there is no record of his ever having sunk a cent of it. Of habits strictly pure, he had never seen a card or a drop of liquor that he had touched, and he had never seen a dollar that he had not touched. He had organized every industry along his path, from paper-selling, boot-blacking, and so upward to his organized lobby at Washington, through which he had caused a heavy tariff to be put upon every commodity necessary to the American people. It was he who had advised his brother organizers to keep Religion on the free list, because, as he assured them, "if we

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

tax it, they'll do without it, while if we don't, they'll trust us for a while yet." And now, at the age of seventy-five, with uncounted millions, and ten United States Senators, and a fourth young wife all in his pocket, he proposed to hand his name to Immortality by simplifying the spelling of English all over the earth. Well, let him do it if he would only do it right.

But this he must do without my assistance; there were other professors, many of them. I did not permit the circulars that now began to pour in from Chickle University to distract me from my index. Striking as these circulars were — and I will instance but one of them: —

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Judge, budge, ridge, acknowledge
ARE SLOW

Call in and try our Quick Spelling
Juj. Buj. Rij. Aknolej —

they went into the basket one after another. To this method of suggestion a second was soon added, and my coat-pockets, as well as my mail, began to be filled with spelling literature. I would go out for a walk, and during this exercise some paper or pamphlet would be slipped into the coat, which I would discover upon my return. I remember pulling out a little book of verse, beginning: —

I am only a primer to teach you to spel,
Which is something that nobody does
very wel.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

A sweet little primer,
A dear little primer,
Sing hel, bel, tel, fel, sel, nel, quel, swel
and smel.

I felt, let me confess it, annoyed
the next day on returning from my
walk to find a new method of sug-
gestion, in great charcoal letters,
on the white marble of my house-
front:—

Such nuisances as
Solemn Comptroller and Wednesday
are preventing
THE KING OF SIAM
from learning English

Nor was my annoyance decreased
by the further announcement that
defaced my house-front upon the
day following:—

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

MILLIONS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

turn away weeping from
PEOPLE MANŒUVRE DIA-
PHRAGM

Much should be conceded to the man who is fighting for his Immortality, as was Masticator; but not too much. And displeasure, it may fairly be said, began to rise in me, when I found, next morning, a page of the primer introduced in the midst of my index:—

Of the bad English spelling you'll surely
beware,

When you notice how stair, pear and
heir rhyme with there;

The sad English spelling,
The mad English spelling,

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Sing hi! for the mare and the mayor
and the prayer.

Next consider, for instance, a word like
enhearsed:

Now what business has it to be rhyming
with first?

Sing hi! the old spelling,

The horrible spelling,

The spelling of nursed and of versed
and of worst.

But our simplified spelng can cure
every il,

And permits nothing foolish like two
l's in pil.

Sing hi! the new spelng,

Our comforting spelng,

Sing pil, bil, fil, wil, til, sil, quil, spil,
and swil.

Yes, Masticator was going too
far — and how had he managed to



Flung the cakes at my man Edward.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

tamper with my index? I rang the bell, and questioned my man Edward sharply. He knew nothing of it, nor did the housemaid, whom I also questioned sharply. And I trusted I should be less harassed on the morrow.

But on the morrow, at breakfast, lifting with my fork the top buckwheat cake in order to spread butter upon the second, I found a leaflet between the two cakes, inscribed:—

Phthisis

How can you eat while a word like that is allowed?

I flung the cakes at my man Edward, and in five minutes I had dismissed every servant in the house.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Quite unable to work, I left the house myself, and set out to take the air. No; Masticator was not doing it right; he was taking too many sudden liberties, not only with the language, but with myself. Becoming gradually aware that a number of young persons were following me with loud and disconcerting expressions, I stepped into a shop where I am unknown, and where they at once offered to brush off my back. A double mirror showed me these words, chalked plainly:—

He wants a

P

in Consumtion

Being now without servants, I decided that I should be free from per-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

secution in the luxurious wilderness of a great hotel. Upon getting into bed in my room in the twelfth story, a dreadful contact caused me to leap to the floor, where my foot dashed down upon some similar dreadfulness, and the shock threw me flat on my face and stomach, only to feel myself instantly plastered with more of the same odious and encasing substance. I believe that I shouted loudly in the dark for some time before hotel employees rushed to my succor; the door was burst open and the light turned on. It was fly-paper; and much time was consumed in relieving my person of it. Every piece bore its motto, such as:—

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

If you'll but drop the e in pi
Better on stomach pi will li.

and also:—

The b in lam
's not worth a dam—

and others.

As early as possible the next morning I sent a message of capitulation to Masticator B. Fellows.

What can I do for you ?

was the message; and the reply came back:—

Delighted you are with us.
Private car train twenty-one to-day.

The secretary of Masticator was at the steps of the car and presented me at once to a most lovely girl. At the news she was to serve on the

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Simplified Spelling Committee with me, my heart bounded, every doubt left me, and I exclaimed:—

“I will spell just as you say.”

“Then,” she most sweetly returned, “never let us consent to any simplification of kiss.” And I counted such answer a very happy omen.

She had come from a woman’s college, and her important work on the authorship of Shakespeare’s plays had demonstrated, beyond refutation, that the plays had been written by Queen Elizabeth, in collaboration with Sir Walter Raleigh and Lady Jane Grey.

“Shall we be in Harrisburg soon, Mr. Kibosh?” she asked the secretary.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“It will be ten minutes after seven, Miss Appleby.”

“And that is a whole three hours!” she cried, with no pleasure in her voice.

“Here is some good chickle,” said Kibosh. And when she would take none, “Then I will,” he said. “The private stock of Masticator B. Fellows. The public gets nothing like this.”

He took a small object from the box that he held and put it in his mouth; and soon, while the train sped on, his large long jaws were oscillating with a smooth motion, and content, like a lukewarm glaze, overspread his immense bald features.

Thus it came to me what chickle was. “Chewing-gum!” I exclaimed.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Kibosh opened gentle eyes upon me. "We do not use that word at Arkansopolis." He smiled, removed the plastic morsel from his mouth, and placed it on the window-sill, that he might speak to me without impediment.

"We always say chickle at Arkansopolis. We like that better. Masticator B. Fellows likes that better. When his genius bought up the small plants ——"

"Is there a chewing-gum trust, too?" asked Miss Appleby.

"Chickle, Miss Appleby, chickle, if you please. When Masticator's genius organized this noble industry, thereby placing a superior, pure, cheap, and uniform article within

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

the reach of eighty million jaws
—”

“But the whole nation does not chew gum!” the lovely girl again, with some spirit, interrupted.

“Chickle, Miss Appleby, if you please. Fifty per cent of our population chickles, and that makes eighty million jaws. When the time came to — ahem — float the proposition, after the bonds, there was an issue of one billion preferred, and two billions of common stock. It did not seem fitting, Miss Appleby, it did not seem dignified, that Wall Street should bandy back and forth such an expression as — ahem — ‘chewing-gum common.’ To the eye, such an expression printed in the financial

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

columns would seem — would — in short, hence chickle, Miss Appleby, noun and verb. Never anything else at Arkansopolis. Will you not chickle now? No? Ah, well. But at least you are with us in the Higher Spelling.” His hand sought the window-sill, and then his mouth; and his jaws resumed their placid oscillation.

Miss Appleby had gone out upon the broad rear platform of our car; and there, as she sat alone, I joined her, saying:—

“Shall we talk of the Higher Spelling?”

But she seemed inclined for not much talk upon any subject; and the nearer Harrisburg drew, the more

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

difficult I found it to engage her attention.

“There is nothing to see,” I assured her when, as our train entered the station, she left me with something almost like eagerness.

I did not get out during our somewhat long stop, being occupied in my private stateroom with unpacking and disposing my clothes for the journey. As we started again, I emerged to find Miss Appleby in bright conversation with a newcomer.

“Professor Jesse Willows,” said Kibosh, “of Paw-paw University, Mountain Dew City.” And as the extraordinarily handsome young man rose, quite six-feet-two, to greet me, Kibosh continued: “The pro-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

fessor's Dictionary of Deadly Weapons, as well as his great work on Bowie-Knives in the Stone Age, makes him a welcome member of our committee."

I felt, I know not why, less glad to see this Professor Willows than Miss Appleby seemed. His long black coat and black tie were fairly proper for a man of erudition; but his hat was soft and broad of brim, and his trousers were of brown corduroy, drawn over high boots.

"And what, sir," I asked him, "may your views be on the Higher Spelling?"

"Bless yore heart, suh," he gayly responded, "what's spellin', anyway? Just alphabet lettuhhs fixed like some

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

man chose to fix 'em befo' you an' me were bawn. An' so I say such a man's had his notions more'n long enough, and it's high time we-all took a whirl at the dictionary."

"I admit, sir," I responded, "that our spelling is but a rag-bag of lawlessness. But it has been ratified by a noble army of great writers. They and the daily press have spread it over the world. Therefore we must go slowly. We must do it right. Derivation ——"

"Bless yore heart, suh," the impetuous youth interrupted me, "what's derivation? Just conquest follo'd by mispronunciation. Julius Cæsuh he lambastes Gaul; and he talks Latin to 'em; he says '*honor*,'

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

an' he goes home; an' the Gauls retain Cæsuh's *idea*, as all puffeck gennlemen should, but the nearest they kin git to the Latin is '*honneur*.' An' then, whoop they come over to England, an' they lambaste the Anglo-Saxons, an' talk to 'em about '*honneur*.' An' the Anglo-Saxons, bein' also puffeck gennlemen, they ketches on to the *idea*, but be-Jeroosalemmed if they kin say it straight, either; an' so it gits to be '*honour*.' An' then comes our glorious Revolution; an' we tell the English, 'Good-by to yo', King Geawge. Good-by to yore iniquitous parliament. Good-by to yore whole dog-goned outfit of tyrants and helots. We-all don' keer how you-all spell anything whatso-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

ever, an' the language of Washington, an' Jeffuhson, an' Patrick Henry, an' all the glorious fathuhs of libuhty, is goin' to spell it *honor* without a u.' An' there you are, back to yore original Latin."

"A noble sentiment, Professor," said Kibosh. "A truly noble sentiment. Will you not join me in a chickle?"

The professor bounded to his full, long height, with all the agility of the *felis catus* of his own wild, native mountains.

"I'm with you, suh!" he exclaimed. "Be-Jeroosalemmed if I wasn't pow'ful thirsty."

"Chickle is not liquid refreshment," said Kibosh, mildly; and



“Chickle is not liquid refreshment.”

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

he held out the box to his tall guest.

The professor glared at it for a moment. "You and yore chickle," he then began, with alarming deliberation, "can go right —"

A quick, girlish cough sounded behind him.

" — to my private cabin in this cyah," the professor continued, with no change in countenance or voice, "where I will join you, and where we will find liquid refreshment."

Kibosh did not dare refuse him, and I came without being asked.

"It's a glorious exercise, suh," said the professor to me, in the private cabin.

"In moderation, yes," I answered.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“May I inquiuh to what you-all are referrin’?” he asked haughtily.

“Why, to this,” I answered, tapping my glass.

The professor grew more stiff. “I referred to simplifyin’ the spellin’ of our language,” he said.

“A glorious exercise?” I repeated vaguely.

“Fo’ the imagination, suh. Turn yore eye whah you will, you’ll see words that need refawmin’, words that need our help, words that cry an’ clamuh to be relieved of the stigma of their congested and nonsensical appearance; nouns, adjectives, verbs, all stuck in the hopeless mud of antiquity, an’ holdin’ out their hands for we-all to drag ’em out an’ bring

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

'em up to date." He now gave me a list. "Look, suh, at those pore, sufferin', aged cripples, awaitin' the renewal of their youth."

"You have a magnificent collection," I remarked to him, after a glance at the list.

"Pshaw!" he returned. "I could double that in an hour. I just jotted that down as I came up the valley from Paw-paw in the Chattanooga Limited. Why, just lookin' out of the cyah windo' would give me notions. I saw a thistle. Down she went on the list, an' down went whistle next her, suggested by our locomotive. Thistle. Whistle. Look at those disgraces. Look at the dead wood in 'em. Are not they

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

just congested all up with pitfalls for the young? Once we get to work at Arkansopolis, and they'll be thissl and wissl, or my name is not Jesse Willows."

He paused, and I looked at his list again. The railway journey had given him a number of suggestions; I saw, in hasty writing:—

Freight. That's dopy. Should be frate.
Bridge. Another has-been. Brij.

My perusal was interrupted by his seizing the list away from me. "The po'tuh has turned the gas higher," he said. "That gives me another whole big line of 'em." And he wrote:—

Light should be lite. So also fight, and tight and others on the same plan.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Po’tuh!” he called out, “what is yore name?”

“Michael, Colonel,” the man answered.

“Another!” exclaimed the professor. And he wrote:—

Michael, Mycle, because cycle.

Bicicle because icicle.

I kept various doubts to myself, and resolved that such must continue my policy if I were ever to have peace ; but, no matter how I might agree to spell bicycle, I was secretly determined never to address my younger brother as Mycle. Imagine thus mutilating a name that had been in our family for generations !

Professor Willows showed his list

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

to Miss Appleby; I saw him, and I saw her evidently add some words to it. But, to my surprise, this seemed to cause them mirth. They did not seek my company, and conversed together without ceasing, in a corner of our car, while Kibosh slumbered; and I wondered if the Higher Spelling was the subject that brought their heads so close to each other. That girl was more and more a disappointment to me; and I retired in no very good humor.

Mycle was not the only word to which, as I dressed myself next morning, I found my opinion to be entirely adverse; frate seemed to me objectionable, nor did I feel any leanings toward brij and lite. And the sur-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

prising readiness with which Professor Willows accepted my criticism failed to make upon me the happy impression which the adoption of one's views by another is apt to cause.

“You don’t like frate, suh?” he said, whipping out his pencil, and quickly writing on his list. “Bless yore heart, then we’ll just make it frait. How does that hit yore fancy?”

I thanked him for his amiability, but my fancy was as little hit by frait as it had been by frate; and it was still less hit when he came to me with his customary enthusiasm some twenty-five minutes after breakfast, to show me forty-three more words

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

that he had simplified since rising from table. Still keeping all thoughts to myself, I read:—

Earth and dearth to irth and dirth, like mirth. Also worth to wirth. Pheasants whirr. Cats should pirr.

I passed the list back with I know not what commendations of his rapidity. He retired with it to the rear platform, where sat Miss Appleby; and almost immediately I heard egregious peals of laughter coming from them both. This, for some reason, kindled in me such annoyance that I put my head out of the door, and cried loudly to them: “Do you intend to make flirt flurt, or hurt hirt? And how about squirt?” And I shut

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

the door sharp upon my words before they could make answer to me. But still, even through the closed door and thick plate-glass windows, their shameless merriment reached me, and seemed, if anything, louder than ever.

The outlook for the Higher Spelling was scarce a bright one, I thought, if the rest of my colleagues, whom I had yet to meet, should approach their solemn responsibilities in anything of the spirit shown by Professor Willows and Miss Appleby. His facile adoption of a new spelling, and equally facile relinquishment of it, gave but poor evidence of any deep thought on this matter; and to see him through the plate-glass as he

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

talked to her on the rear platform, no one would easily be persuaded that spelling was the subject of their colloquy; and lastly, when he fetched a large shawl and hung it across the window outside, so that they were wholly screened from view, I found it no light effort to believe that it was to shield her from the cold blast, as he informed me.

I sought (without great eagerness) the companionship of Kibosh. “Do you not fear,” I asked him, “that we may not find ourselves able to reach an agreement as to the system by which this respelling should proceed?”

“What would hinder it?” he inquired.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Of course, our present spelling is but a rag-bag of lawlessness,” I replied, for I was growing fond of my description of it. “But great authors and newspapers have spread it round the globe. The sun never sets on English spelling. We must join the great English universities with us. We must join Canada, India, Australia. We must do it right.”

“England will have to follow us!” he declared.

“If you’ll watch England,” I said, “I think you’ll find she has her own ideas about that.”

“Then our publishers and writers will ignore England,” he replied.

“If you’ll watch our publishers and writers,” I again said, “you’ll see

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

they'll be slow to let go their English market by making books that would be illegible throughout the British Empire."

"What are authors, anyhow?" he demanded. "It is our business men who are our glory."

"If you'll watch our business men," I repeated, not without acerbity, "you'll find they have London correspondents, and they'll not care to run two sorts of spelling with their stenographers."

Kibosh thought awhile, and then, with his gentle smile, he again removed his chickle and placed it on the window-sill.

"But, nevertheless, Masticator will have gained his point," he said.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Scarcely so, if a system fails us, and we do nothing,” I suggested.

He seemed not to hear me. “And all of the committee, every member, will have gained the point as well.”

“You’ll pardon me, but what is the point?” I now asked him.

“And the English language,” he continued more and more gently, “it will have gained the point, too.”

“I must confess,” I said, “to utter ignorance of your meaning.”

Kibosh smiled for a long while, looking at me very kindly.

“You will readily appreciate,” he at length began, “that the greatest need of mankind is Publicity. It is as essential to the German Emperor as it is to the female society leader,

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

or the trick mule. We are no exceptions, we leaders of thought, and teachers of youth, and captains of industry; we too must have Publicity or — ahem — pass under. And as the demand for Publicity increases, the supply of it naturally diminishes. You understand that? Well, now, any association with Masticator B. Fellows means Publicity at once for the lucky individual. But there are times when the vast sweep of economic currents ties up all the available Publicity, and at those times great enterprises languish from its scarcity. It may befall that even such giant operators as Masticator B. Fellows find themselves embarrassed. It is then only the man of genius

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

whose magic hand can smite the rock in some novel way, and cause Publicity again to gush forth fresh and sparkling — it is then only he who is heard from. There has been such a time of late. Publicity was tied up, and Masticator needed some for his — for certain plans he has to benefit the human race. Now, what does Masticator do? He surveys the general situation, he thinks it over, and presently he says ‘Spelling Reform.’ He smites the rock, and there you have it. You understand me? Well, supposing you gentlemen do fail to — ahem — make any considerable impression upon the English language, you will have made a considerable impression on the

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

public; the rock will have gushed, Masticator's point will be gained. He will have secured the Publicity he needs for his— his benevolent enterprises; each of you gentlemen will have secured Publicity for your names and works; and we mustn't forget the English language. It will have got Publicity, too; it needs it, like all the rest of us. I'm sure you understand me."

Thus Kibosh finished, and it entered my mind to descend at our next stop, and take the first train back to my own place; but this thought I quickly dismissed, remembering Masticator's methods of reaching those whom he wanted. And (although I know this is unworthy) I was become

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

very curious to see what we should all do, once we were gathered together. Were all the rest of my colleagues coming for Publicity? I glanced at the window, where the shawl still screened Professor Willows and Miss Appleby, and it seemed to me that they had come rather for Privacy.

“Who are the rest of my colleagues?” I now asked Kibosh.

“Well, now, I’m afraid you’ve got me,” he responded. “There’s — let me see — Professor Flawless Nathaniel Maverick, of Fishball University, Massachusetts. He is with us. A profound scholar, sir.”

“What is his line?” I asked.

“Well, now, that’s another tough

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

one. Let us see. Did he write The Fuel of the Future?"

I shook my head, being ignorant. "Or was it The Mustard Plaster in Pharaoh's Time?" Kibosh dreamily pursued.

"What is the fuel of the future?" I asked.

"Pecan nuts. I am certain of that," answered Kibosh. "But whether he's that one, or whether it's Lysander Totts —"

"Who is Lysander Totts?" I inquired.

"Another profound scholar, sir. Of Numa Pompilius University, New York. But we've got them from all around — from Seminole, Florida, Oglethorpe, Georgia, Lafitte, Loui-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

siana, Sandys, Virginia, Graftsburg, Pennsylvania—but you'll meet them to-morrow at Chickle University. All profound scholars, sir. It was Totts, come to think of it.”

“Think of what?” I asked.

“Pecan nuts,” said Kibosh.

I should have been glad to learn the names of all my colleagues, and what they had written, that I might be the better prepared to meet them; but Kibosh could be sure only of Totts and his book; and Professor Willows and Miss Appleby had not heard even of Totts, when I asked them at lunch to enlighten me.

“What mattuh, suh?” cried Willows, cheerily. “They’ll tell you

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

quick enough themselves why they're so famous."

At this remark Miss Appleby broke into much gayety.

"Got many words this mawnin', Professuh?" asked Willows of me; and I retorted, with what should have been telling reproof, that I was not of those who can improvise thorough work.

It was extraordinary how much this young man's remarks pleased Miss Appleby. He was but a poor companion for the lovely girl; and when, after lunch, he retired to slumber in his cabin (as he called it), I took my seat beside her on the rear platform. She was most amiable, but bade me first take down the shawl

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

behind us. The cold blasts, she said, had ceased. We talked for some time, and it was easy to see that under proper guidance her mind would open to all befitting things. Not until Professor Willows came out of his cabin and joined us, did I feel her grow distant again. Without preliminary, he asked: "What does a man who sits down on a sharp needle most resemble?" And, without waiting, he answered, "A profane upstart."

Into such levity I could not possibly enter; I resolved to wait the morrow, and the succeeding days of our convention at Chickle University, for opportunities to exert upon this impressionable young girl my wholesome influence.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

We reached our destination during the forenoon of the next day, and I was amazed when I beheld spreading out before me the vast institution where we were to hold our sittings. Chickle University covered, with its grounds and buildings, four square miles. Swift electric cars ran everywhere by routes so well planned that less than four minutes were consumed between the two most distant points. The several thousand buildings were of a uniform pattern, but lettered on the outside, so as easily to be distinguished: House of Latin, House of Chiropody, House of Marriage and Divorce, and so forth. Everything was taught here, and had its separate house; and the courses of

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

instruction were named on a plan as uniform as the buildings: Get French Quick, Get Religion Quick, Get Football Quick, and so forth. The University was open to both sexes. I saw great crowds of young men and women trying to push their way into the House of Marriage and Divorce; and Kibosh informed me that this course was the second in popularity, and in such active demand that a corps of ninety-six instructors was kept lecturing continuously day and night. The football course had overflowed its own building so copiously that it was also filling the houses of Latin, Greek, Music, History, and Literature.

“And what do those students do?” I inquired.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“There have been none,” he answered. “We have accommodations for two million students; but if this spelling reform fails to prove the — ahem — you’ll remember what we said about rock-smiting, Mr. Greenberry — fails to prove the — er — attraction that Masticator anticipates, any idle houses in this University plant can be readily turned into the Chickle plant, which adjoins it.”

I asked him, would they not meet great difficulty in finding professors for two million students?

“Professors are our lightest expense,” he replied. “We can always pick them up for next to nothing.”

So saying, Kibosh led us to the

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

library; and here were some gentlemen assembled whose appearance clearly proclaimed them to be profound scholars, and who were to be of our spelling committee. While Kibosh made us known to each other, and we exchanged our formal greetings, the eye of each scholar sought the eye of every other scholar with that thirsty look an author wears, when the hope for compliments upon his writings flutters in his breast. But we were true professors, all of us, and not one had read a word that any of the others had ever written.

Deceit should always be discouraged, nay, firmly punished, in the young; for by reason of their immaturity they have but little judg-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

ment when to practise it; but to the old it is frequently of the greatest service. Intending, therefore, to be as agreeable as possible, I approached Professor Lysander Totts with a feigned knowledge of his work. Shaking him cordially by the hand, I said, "Ah, yes; Pecan Nuts!"

"What?" he replied, staring.

"Why, Pecan Nuts!" I repeated.
"Let me congratulate —"

"My name is Totts," he interrupted.

"To be sure!" I exclaimed.
"Who has not read *The Fuel of the Future?*"

"I haven't," said Totts.

I corrected myself hastily. "What an absurd slip of the tongue!" I

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

gayly ejaculated. “I meant Mustard Plasters in Pharaoh’s Time.”

“I haven’t read that, either,” said Totts.

I should now have been at some loss, but a plaintive voice behind me said, “Hup, hup, hup, hup.”

I turned, and saw a smiling little old man, with delicate silver locks that hung well-nigh to his collar.

“Hup, hup,” said he again, very amiably.

I turned back to Totts in bewilderment.

“He stutters,” Totts explained.

The voice behind me now said with a sudden sort of explosion, “I wrote it.”

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

I turned again, and, catching both his hands as a drowning man is said to catch a straw, I wrung them earnestly and long. “A great work!” I called out to him, as if he were deaf. “A very great work!” And not well knowing what I did, I further shouted to Miss Appleby, who was passing us: “He wrote it! Pecan Nuts!”

“Hup, hup,” said the little man. “Mustard Plasters.”

Little as I owe Miss Appleby, I must always hold her memory in gratitude for her coming forward at this extreme moment.

“Of course it is Mustard Plasters!” she said, with delightful sweetness; “and you must write

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

your name in my copy, dear Professor Egghorn.”

He extended an eager hand for the volume.

“It is in my trunk,” she continued promptly; “and your signature will make a unique gem of what is already a precious treasure. And you, dear Professor Totts, when I am unpacked, you will surely not refuse me the same honor? Professor Totts, you know,” she added to me, “has proved that Cleopatra was a man.”

“Then who wrote *Pecan Nuts?*” I whispered to her hastily.

“He hasn’t come yet,” she hastily whispered back.

“I am sure,” said Kibosh, leading

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

a tall new arrival among us, "that Professor Camillo Cottssill needs no introduction here. We all welcome the man who has said the last word on — the last word on — on — well, now, really, it escapes me, Professor," he finished, turning his wide, gentle smile upon the newcomer, who glared at him angrily, and announced with unnecessary loudness: —

"Nostalgia in the Lobster."

"Thank you, Professor," said Kibosh; "thank you kindly. I think lunch is now awaiting us in the House of Bread."

After brief preparation in the rooms assigned to us, we lunched with the students; and, as I passed down the hall, I saw Totts and Egg-



Professors Totts and Egghorn signing their
respective works.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

horn signing their respective volumes for Miss Appleby.

“So quickly unpacked?” I asked her.

“Dear, no!” she returned. “Professor Willows easily bought them for me at the University Book Shop.”

“I have but one complaint against your exquisite deceit,” I said to her. “Why did you leave me out?”

“Ah!” she said, “who could deceive you?”

I strove, but unsuccessfully, to occupy a seat beside her at table; it was Jesse Willows who got it, the other being taken by Egghorn, while Totts placed himself opposite. Napoleon preferred men with great noses, but that of Totts would have

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

pleased him too well, I think; and Totts blew it continually. It was my hope that supper, or dinner, or whatever they called the next meal, would not be served with the distressing rapidity of this one; one had barely the time to swallow, and the food went whole down one's throat; but the next meal, and all meals, were the same, and, had our convention lasted longer than it did, I should have fallen victim to a grave dyspepsia. This, I learned, was another instance of the vast genius of Masticator B. Fellows: while educating his students, he created in them the need for the product of his own monopoly. He gave them no time to chew at their meals, and chickle was served free

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

in all the houses. For chewing, at some time or other, is necessary to digestion, and among the thousands at Chickle University I saw not one anywhere, boy or girl, whose mouth was not going like a slow rabbit's; and to judge from the universal oscillatory motion of the jaws of the American people in trains and all public places, I see they are learning that great economic principle of Masticator's, which is announced everywhere in the street cars:—

TIME IS MONEY

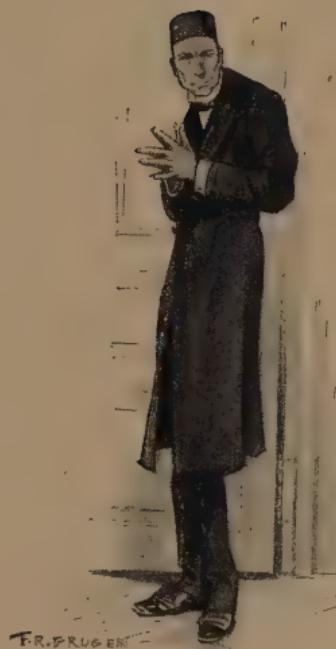
He who chickles
Saves his nickles—

nickles being the simple spelling of nickels.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

This great man allowed us at length to see him next morning, when we assembled to begin our work. We sat round an imposing table some twenty strong — for all the profound scholars were now arrived — and in front of each scholar, on the ample green baize table-cover, was a great dictionary, with a great glass ink-stand and writing materials. Tall blackboards stood behind us, waiting to receive the words we should reform; but the best of it was to find myself sitting next Miss Appleby, with Willows quite an agreeable distance away. Kibosh had arranged all our seats, and it is the best thing I know of him.

When Masticator B. Fellows en-



Masticator B. Fellows.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

tered to open our convention, it was plain at once whence Kibosh had acquired his manner and his appearance — so far as he could acquire this latter: the secretary might have been an early, bad photograph of the magnate. To see Masticator, he was the creature of brotherly love, the preacher of benign gospels, the teacher of female academies; no smell of Senate or Syndicate hung about him. Bald, with a silken skull-cap, bland, with his ten pointed fingers meeting as if to bless, with a sunrise smile, and a black coat as long and unlovely as conscious virtue, he stood before us in benevolent silence, and we rose as one scholar. But at once he motioned us to sit down.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“I think there’s a dollar-sign in his jaw,” whispered Miss Appleby to me.

Already Masticator was addressing us, slowly and softly.

“Dear friends,” he said, “be welcome. I am worth two hundred and forty-five millions. Thank God that you are not. Thank God that you are poor. Thank God for your scanty meals and clothing, and your ceaseless failure to make both ends meet. Pray God you may die poor. How I envy you all your blessed privilege of struggle! Thank God, and now to business.

“Everything is getting better. Man is getting better. Woman is getting better. Life, Liberty, Happiness — all getting better. And

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

chickle. Better and better. Then why not English Spelling? Dear friends, I expect results from you. Let us sing the Ode."

A gasoline organ began to play at the end of the apartment, and we profound scholars stood up and sang together:—

My spelling 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of spelling-bee,
 Of thee I sing.
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
Land where my fathers dide,
For spelling simplifie
 Let freedom ring

"A beautiful pome," said Lysander Totts, on my other side.

"Where were you educated?" I asked him.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Surracuse, Noo Yorruk,” he responded; and he blew his large nose.

“And now, dear friends,” Masticator was saying, “I leave you. Remember the poor foreigners, remember the little children. It is for them that the English language exists; and for them we must, therefore, smooth our spelling’s cruel path. I expect results, dear friends.” So saying, he was gone.

“Yes, there is a dollar-sign in his jaw,” repeated Miss Appleby.

“Suggestions are now in order,” said Kibosh, taking the chairman’s seat.

Three profound scholars stood up. “The only way —” they began, with one voice.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Professor Flawless Nathan Maverick has the floor,” said Kibosh. “I presume the Professor will think no change in pecan nuts necessary.” And the chairman smiled sociably at the scholar.

“The only way,” said Maverick, “is to abolish all words that foreigners cannot spell.”

“You mean cut 'em out of the language, suh?” inquired Jesse Willows.

“I do.”

“Phew!” whistled Willows.

“Order, gentlemen,” smiled the chairman. “Professor Camillo Cott-sill has the floor.”

“The only way,” said this scholar, “is to abolish all words that children cannot spell.”

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Phew!” repeated Willows.

“Order, gentlemen, please,” said the chairman, gently tapping an inkstand with a pencil. But he was not heeded.

“Who are you whistling at?” demanded Camillo Cottssill.

“Can’t yore children spell?” retorted Willows.

“Can yours?” shouted Cottssill.

At this Jesse Willows blushed a deep red, and so did Miss Appleby.

“He is not married, Professor,” said Kibosh, tapping the inkstand soothingly.

“My little daughter Zola B. can spell everything,” said Maverick.

“How about the others?” demanded Cottssill.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“My salary only affords me one,” stated Maverick, with resignation.

“Then how can you judge?” said Cottssill. “Receive, and believe, and bereave should be cut out at once.”

“They should not,” said Maverick.

“Oh, cut everything out,” sighed Willows.

“Hup, hup, hup, hup,” began Professor Egghorn.

“The author of Mustard Plasters has the floor,” said Kibosh, with civility.

“The only way,” continued Egghorn, “is to hup, hup, hup.”

“Start the organ, please,” said Kibosh to an assistant; and while the gasoline music played, “My spelling ‘tis of thee,” Kibosh walked round

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

the table and gave every one an individual box of chickle. We chewed in silence, waiting for the voice of Professor Egghorn to go again.

“Hup, hup,” said he, at length; “phonetic.”

“I object!” Cottsville and Maverick called out loudly together.

“I move it’s phonetic,” said Totts.

“Second the hup, hup,” said Egghorn.

“Those in favor —” Kibosh began.

“That’s not properly seconded,” interrupted Cottsville.

“Motion!” finished Egghorn, with a shriek. And we carried phonetic by eighteen to two.

“Since Professor Egghorn has

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

shown us the only way," said Kibosh, "will he not kindly lead off with his suggestions for a reform list?"

But once again the professor's utterance was transfixed.

"Give the pore gennleman a piece of chalk," said Willows, "and send him to the blackboa'd."

With the blackboard we now made visible progress, which I decided it was best for the present not to interrupt. Let as many suggestions as possible be made; then we could weed them out. Consent was undivided upon a number of words, and some old spelling passed away in peace. The letter *u* disappeared from honor and favor, although, with much surprise, I overheard Miss

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Appleby saying to herself that she intended to retain it in all her private correspondence. The k was kicked out of Frederic.

(“There’s nothing new about that, either,” said Miss Appleby, in a whisper.)

“But I shall not permit any such liberty to be taken with my own name,” said Professor Maverick, firmly; and this was conceded to him, Professor Totts objecting.

“We shall never reach consistency at this rate,” grumbled Lysander Totts.

“Who came here to be consistent?” retorted Maverick.

“We came here for spelling reform,” added Camillo Cottssill.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

(“Good gracious,” said Miss Appleby, under her breath.)

Presently it was the letter h that occupied us; and old honour now became onor (some were for oner, but gave in), followed by erb, our, and umor.

“What’s that?” demanded Totts, pointing to our.

“Time of day,” answered Maverick. “Sixty minutes make one our.”

“Then nobody can tell it from our cat, our cow,” said Professor Totts.

“We can’t help that,” said Maverick.

“We’re only here for simplification,” Cottswill said again.

(“Good gracious,” repeated Miss Appleby.)

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Make it ower,” suggested Cott-sill; and this was done.

“Make it minits, too,” said Totts; and this was done.

“Make it sekonds,” said Maver-ick; and this was done.

Cott-sill turned to Egghorn at the blackboard. “Add eir, umble, otel, and istorical,” said he.

“No, he sha’n’t!” cried Totts, fiercely.

“Are we phonetic or not?” de-manded Cott-sill, turning on him.

(“You’re a pack of geese,” said Miss Appleby.)

“I never said umble in my life!” shouted Totts.

“I reckon he don’t use the aix-pression,” said Willows.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“And if istorical is adopted, I’ll resign now,” Totts continued.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen,” protested Kibosh.

“I move those last h’s be laid on the table,” said Maverick; and this was done.

“Past participles,” Egghorn now wrote on the blackboard. “Termination *ed* to be changed to *t*; for instance, blest, exprest, dro——”

“What are you going to do with rest?” interrupted Totts.

“And test?” said some one down the table.

“And nest?” another called out.

“Can’t you let him finish?” said Cottssill. And Egghorn continued,

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Dropt, stopt, spilt, kilt, and so forth.”

(“Kilt!” whispered Miss Appleby.
“Oh, dear!”)

“Rattlet instead of rattled will look funny,” observed some one.

“So will mart and wart,” remarked Willows, “instead of marred and warred.”

“If you have rattlet and mart and wart,” yelled Totts, “I’ll resign right now, right now, right now!”

“Who thought of having them, having them, having them?” thundered Cottssill.

“Gentlemen! Oh, Gentlemen!” wailed Kibosh.

“But consistency —” objected Maverick.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“You cut out consistency yourself,” Cottssill reminded him. We despatched the past participles, and came also without much disturbance through catalog, demagog, and so forth (vogue and rogue made some trouble, and our fundamental principle of inconsistency had once more to be asserted), but when their blood was roused and the fire of simplification grew hot in them, and they adopted the following with cheers and noises of feet —

Receev, deceev, conceev, beleev,
weev, leev, greev, seez, pleez, teez —

I felt that we had really got near the weeding-out point, especially when Jesse Willows rose and added fleez. “Plural of dogbiters,” he ex-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

plained, and sat down quietly. At this Miss Appleby gave one brief, happy laugh, but at once resumed a singular tapping of her foot which I had begun to observe. We now thoroughly phoneticked many words: blud, for instance, and wunss (which is so much phoneticker than once!) and the days of the week: Munday, for instance, and Toozday. (I say Tewsday, myself, but I did not mention it to these profound American scholars.)

“My little daughter Zola B.,” said Professor Maverick, “can always spell Wednesday.”

“My nine children never can,” said Totts.

“I withdraw the objection,” said

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Maverick; and so it was Wens-day.

Skwirl, for squirrel, was next agreed upon, and lepard, and eegl. And as the blood of the scholars grew ever hotter and hotter, Constitoo-shun, Deklarayshun, and United Staits were adopted.

“But my Zola B.—” began Maverick.

“What are you-all goin’ to call yore next?” asked Willows.

Maverick sighed. “My salary only affords —”

“Beg yore pardon, suh, I forgot,” said Willows, with sympathy.

It was here that I rose. “Gentlemen,” I said, “let us do it right. Of

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

course, English spelling is but a rag-bag of lawlessness."

"He has said that before," muttered Jesse Willows.

"But," I continued, "the sun never sets on English spelling."

"I object to these constant, trivial interruptions," stated Cott-sill.

"Yes, let us onward," urged the chairman.

"Play ball!" added Totts.

"Chew gum!" finished Cott-sill.

"I'm through," Egghorn said, sitting down.

It was beyond my power to guide them. I also sat down. I also was through.

"Through?" exclaimed Totts.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“That reminds me.” And running to his blackboard he wrote:—

THRU

“What’s that thing?” asked Willows.

“Hup, hup,” began Egghorn.

“Through,” replied Totts, raising his voice.

“*What?*” said Willows, raising his voice, too.

“Through, through!” answered the convention in a body.

And Miss Appleby, amid the general din, remarked, “That’s the way a pig would spell if it got the chance.”

“Thru, clu, blu, nu, hu,” wrote Totts.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Hu? Hu?” repeated Willows, vacantly; “what’s hu?”

“Hup, hup, hup,” vainly continued Egghorn, waving his arms.

“Hu’s who,” explained Cottisill, loudly.

“Who, who!” explained the whole convention to Willows.

“Booh, pooh!” said Willows. And running to the blackboard he added:

“Bu, pu, and stu, also glu.”

But Egghorn was now standing on his chair, and screaming, “Hup, hup, hup,” with the most energetic violence.

“Oh, write it!” every one cried out to him.

They lifted Egghorn down from his chair, and he ran eagerly to his black-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

board, upon which he wrote, “This is illiterate, this is unscholarly.”

And again the convention cried out together, “We’re not here to be scholarly, we’re not here to be literate.”

“Have yore way, gennlemen,” said Jesse Willows, “I’ll stand for anything.”

“Well, I can’t stand this any longer!” exclaimed Miss Appleby; and rising to her pretty feet, she continued, “Gentlemen, in your charitable solicitude for foreigners, you may be making our spelling easy for Lithuanians (though I doubt it), but you are making it quite impossible for the English.”

Upon this a cold silence fell, and

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

then, "And who are the English, madam?" asked Cottisill.

Miss Appleby gave her delightful brief laugh. "I'm sorry you don't know, sir," said she, "for I didn't come here to begin your education." And she sat down. There was an impulse in me to call her Gertrude, but I felt it to be premature.

A general murmuring confusion of consulting and dissenting voices now arose among the scholars.

"But what did you come here for?" I asked Miss Appleby.

"Not to see unbroken dogs put their muddy paws all over the greatest language in the world," she retorted.

"Dear me, dear me," I returned,

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

with soothing depreciation, for she was plainly very much incensed, “then what did you come for?”

“Oh, for reasons,” she returned evasively.

Doubts that I could not define began suddenly to fill my mind, and I said to her, “Didn’t you write about Shakespeare?”

“A college joke,” she answered contemptuously. “I’m writing a poem now. I shall call it, ‘How we brought the Good Spelling from Ghent to Aix.’”

“Then you don’t believe in the Higher Spelling?” I asked.

“No!” she declared, with defiance.

“Does Professor Willows?” I pursued.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Hadn’t you better ask him about that?” she replied.

I think my face must have turned the reddest that anger can paint faces; for now, at any rate, I had no doubts as to how I had been made game of in the private car. Yes, they had mocked me. The impudent young man had manufactured absurd spelling for my serious attention, and he and Miss Appleby had then made merry together over it, and over myself. But before I could frame a fitting rebuke to the frivolous though lovely young woman beside me, a distracting hub-bub of voices was set up, and through this I heard Kibosh calling:—

“On your blackboards, gentlemen, on your blackboards.”



Professor Dudelsacker.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

The convention gradually heard him, too, and scholar after scholar bounded from his chair, seized a piece of chalk, and began to write. Only one was left, who stood at his place, pouring forth the most execrable sounds I have ever heard.

“Professor Dudelsacker has the floor,” said Kibosh.

“Burrmeowskreeyiyiwurrburrrwwwowmeow,” went the professor.

“Turn that Central Pennsylvania Dutch quacker out!” shouted some one.

“I’ve resigned already meowow-wow,” squealed Dudelsacker, in a fury; and he took his departure at once.

But this brought us no calm.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

Twenty pieces of chalk were rattling on the blackboards like a platoon of busy telegraphic instruments. Each scholar was making his own list for the new dictionary of English, and I read the lists of Totts, Maverick, and Cottscill, so far as they had written them. Jesse Willows was writing, too, with sweeping flourishes; but I had ceased to place faith in his integrity.

Surracuse	Beverly Fahms	Cyar
Yurrup	Rud	Cyard
Surrup	But	Cyart
Mawrul	Cut	Gyarden
Sawrul	Grantha	Coat-house
Kwawrul	Anywheres	<i>Cottscill's list</i>
Awringe	Everywheres	
Amurrican	Nowheres	
Tremenjus	Tremendious	

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“Awringe,” I murmured aloud, in ignorance of its meaning; but my own voice revealed to me that it was our chief Florida fruit, as pronounced by Lysander Totts, of Numa Pom-pilius, New York, discoverer of Cleopatra’s true sex. The whole great West was rattling away on the boards behind me, but what I saw in front of me was enough to hold my attention; and my eyes were straying back and forth between awringe and grantha, when Totts, happening to glance up from his work, beheld the work of Maverick next him.

He stopped abruptly. “Rud?” he inquired of the professor from Fish-ball University, author of Pecan Nuts.

“Road,” explained Maverick, writ-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

ing out the old spelling. "Road, boat, coat."

"Hm," said Totts, with disapprobation.

"But what is *grantha*?" I whispered to Miss Appleby.

"Can it be a breakfast food?" she suggested; and again I wished to call her Gertrude.

Totts was still gazing at Maverick's list. "Hm. Yes," he repeated. "Bean talk from Boston. We don't want it."

"Are we phonetic or not?" returned Maverick, sharply.

But Totts had now caught sight of Cottswill's list. "Anywheres?" he read aloud. "Why anywheres? Rub all those out."

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“I will not,” declared the author of *Nostalgia in the Lobster*. “I guess if you can be phonetic, I can.”

“I’m afraid they’re skipping grantha,” said Miss Appleby.

“Who says anywheres?” demanded Totts.

“I do,” snapped Cottssill.

“Well, I don’t,” Totts replied.
“And, what’s more, I won’t.”

Cottssill raised his voice. “I guess I can be phonetic just as ——”

“Anywheres is vulgar,” interrupted Totts.

“Vulgar yourself!” screamed Cottssill, jumping up and down.

“Vulgar! Vulgar!” chimed in Maverick, whom the term bean talk had nettled.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

But Totts had spied the list of Jesse Willows, and was pointing at it disdainfully. "And pray," said he, "what may a coat-house be?"

Now the handsome young man from Paw-paw was the last person to select for addressing in such a tone as Lysander Totts had taken.

"I beg yore pardon, suh?" he remarked, so politely that I became filled with apprehension.

Miss Appleby was gazing at him with all her eyes. "What do you think of him?" she whispered to me.

I suppose that indignation at his unwarrantable treatment of me in the car rendered me imprudent. "My dear Miss Appleby," I said to her, "my dear Gertrude, he is as beautiful

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

as the day, as ignorant as a Socialist, and as dishonest as a plumber."

"How dare you speak of my husband so?" she replied. "We were married this morning. That's all we came for to your silly convention. Good-by." And rising, she swept out of the room.

But her exit was unobserved. The great West was still rattling on its blackboards, Maverick and Cottsville were scowling darkly at Totts. Totts was pointing one finger at coat-house, and Willows was smiling steadily at Totts, in a manner that now convinced me we were approaching the edge of something quite particular. Nor did even the bridegroom know that his bride had left us.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“I beg yore pardon, suh?” he repeated.

“Coat-house. What’s that?” said Totts.

“It is whah they’d have you, suh, if they caught you teachin’ any o’ those railroad accidents o’ yore’s to the young.”

“Yes, indeed; yes, indeed!” cried Maverick and Cottssill, eagerly.

Totts loudly blew his nose. “It shall remain court-house in the dictionary of scholars,” he remarked.

Willows ran his eye up and down Totts’ list, and then up and down Totts. “Schooling,” he softly returned, “has done powerful little for the Amurrican who sails to Yur-

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

rup and puts surrup on his hot cakes.”

“Yes, indeed; yes, indeed!” said Cottssill and Maverick again.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen!” pleaded Kibosh, “do not quarrel.”

“Kwawrul, you mean,” smiled Jesse Willows. “It’s immawrul to kwawrul in Surracuse, Noo Yorruk.”

Totts now began to show signs of jumping up and down.

“Have we adopted phonetic spelling, or have we not?” he roared.

“Not yore kind,” said Willows.

“Yore!” echoed Totts. “Listen to that dialect!” And he blew his noise more loudly.

“Hup, hup,” began Egghorn; but his voice stuck as usual.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

“You should get a chauffeur,” said Cottssill, severely, to him.

“Hup, hup. Compromise,” finished Egghorn.

“Ah, yes, gentlemen, there we have it!” said Kibosh, earnestly. “Compromise is progress. Let us all accept one another. Thus the cause will profit.”

His exhortation produced a brief, a very brief, lull. Each looked at the neighboring blackboards in silence; and Kibosh, doubtless with the idea of harmony, set the organ once more to playing, “My spelling ‘tis of thee,” while the rattling West continued to create a new language behind us.

At length Cottssill sighed. “Very

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

well," he said, "for the sake of anywheres, I'll vote for surrup."

"That's wise, that's kind, that's good," said Kibosh; and he beat one hand gently on the table.

At this hopeful point, Jesse Willows noticed, for the first time, that no lady was now present, and his long body made a singular twisting and free motion beneath his clothes.

"I will vote for rud and anywheres," Totts said. "But I doubt if I can accept coat-house."

Jesse Willows took him instantly by the nose. "You'll accept nothin'," said he, with great sweetness; and he shook him forward and back. "I am weary of you and yore antics," and he shook him right and

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

left. "You're goin' to rub out every-
thing you have written," and he
shook him round and round.

"Help," gurgled the struggling
Totts. "Help!"

"No, indeed; no, indeed," cried
Maverick and Cottssill, delighted.

"You gentlemen are included,"
said Willows to them, and they both
hastily covered their noses with their
hands. "I don't mean that way,"
he continued. "But you're goin' to
rub yore lists out, too. Why, you're
the contemptiblest of all the great
American frauds. Just because you
have written a picayune book on some
picayune specialty, you pass for bein'
educated in our half-civilized country.
Put you among genuine scholars and

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

you would look like old gum shoes. I know my accent is provincial," he paused and looked at Totts for a moment, "but it's a heap prettier'n yore's," he shook Totts round and round again, "and you and I are just goin' to let the English language take care of herself. She has done it for a thousand years, and she'll do it for a thousand more, changin' what she pleases an' keepin' what she pleases."

So saying, the young man, even as one drags a resisting dog by a chain, dragged the howling Totts by his nose to the blackboard, and forced the rubber into his hand; and as Totts hung back his firmly imprisoned organ received a still more acute sensation,

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

whereat he leaped into the air, and erased his Surracuse list at one sweep. And next, since Cottssill and Maverick were hanging back also, one with his arms shielding grantha, while the other shielded anywhere, Totts was conducted to those words. "Out with grantha," commanded Jesse. "We'll keep it grandfather for a while yet, Mr. Bean Talk." They attempted to defend their lists, but vainly; and in the conflict that arose, a rubber flew crooked and hit one of the great West sharply in the back of the neck. He, being under a misapprehension, thereupon kicked his neighbor savagely, and in a moment all the profound scholars engaged together in a blind war, rubbing out one



Jesse had mounted upon the table with the still faintly bellowing Totts.

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

another's lists, whacking one another's heads, and often rolling by twos and threes beneath the table, from which dictionaries and inkstands were falling continuously. It was with the greatest difficulty that I got the gasoline organ between myself and harm's way. Jesse Willows had mounted upon the table with the still faintly bellowing Totts, whom he led slowly from one end to the other, amid the clouds of chalk and the general bedlam.

At the first pause which exhaustion brought, Masticator B. Fellows was perceived to be looking on quietly.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “dear friends” (and these words stopped

THE SIMPLE SPELLING-BEE

everything), "I am well pleased with what you have accomplished. I expected results, and I have got them. The surgeon awaits you in the House of Bandages."

No serious wounds were found; but also no scholar was found to be upon speaking terms with any other. By the generosity of Masticator each was sent home separately in a private car, on a special train, with plenty of chickle.

Masticator had created all the publicity that he desired. New students swarmed in armies to his University, and he presently issued a billion more shares of Chickle common. The press of the whole country rang with the enterprise.

SIMPLE SPELLERS WED

was one of the first headlines that greeted me upon my homeward journey. Yes; Jesse Willows and Gertrude Appleby were the exceptions; these two scholars had gone away in the same car together to their honeymoon, while I returned lonely to the index of my forthcoming volume.

Heigho!



08-CFJ-691

